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REF ID: A651261

JAN 29 1954

DATE

INFO: Chief of Station, EB  
Chief of Station, Pullach

TO: Chief, EB

FROM: Chief of Mission, Frankfurt

SUBJECT: General - Operational

MESSAGE: American Press Interest in Gehlen disclosures

Ref: EGA-13410

1. We would like to call [ ] and your attention to the attached copy of a memorandum of conversation between Richard Rottlaert and [ ]. You may find this memorandum interesting in connection with Rottlaert's statement that he had been "kissed off" by [ ]. In any case the attachment will be of assistance in presenting a somewhat more rounded picture of the events.
2. For Pullach: Copy of memorandum of conversation mentioned above was sent you in EGA-3230.

list:

- 3 - EB (w/att)
- 2 - Bonn (w/o att)
- 2 - Pullach (w/o att)

27 Jan 54

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Ref: 51-28A

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19 November 1953

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Memo of Conversation with Richard Hottellet

(Mr.) Reinhard  
SUSPECT: Press Interest in the Gehlen Organization

(Independent of CBS)

1. On 17 November Richard Hottellet of the OBS arranged an appointment with [ ] and held a conversation lasting from 5:15 until 6:00 PM.

2. Hottellet said that he, as well as other correspondents, had collected material of their own on the Gehlen Organization and wished to know, in light of the increasing comments in the German press, how they should handle the subject and if they could check it out with American authorities. Hottellet asked me what I could tell him of the background of the Gehlen Organization. I told Mr. Hottellet that I had heard well of him, that he was undoubtedly a reasonable man and that I could obviously tell him nothing. It was established that I had officially given him an answer of "no comment." However, we agreed to discuss various hypotheses off the record.

3. The first hypothesis I outlined was that he and other able correspondents, including besides American, also British and German, had been stumbling over leads to the Gehlen story for some time. If they followed these leads they eventually would come to a dead end when the correspondents attempted to get in touch with responsible officials or leaders. Almost no serious papers had carried this subject through to a conclusion and most of the comments had appeared in the more sensational press. If it were true, as stated, that the Gehlen Organization was an incipient German intelligence organization surely this would be a matter of interest to and probable protest from many sources. Some of these would normally be American CIC, British FSS, French Surete, the SPD, the ADT BLANK and the RIV who might be presumed to have vested interest, HICOG and USAREUR. The list would be quite large if one counted all of the organizations that might wish to investigate or take an attitude upon such a matter. If the supposition is true that an incipient German intelligence organization has existed for some time and if none of these very interested parties have complained and if inquiries lead to blank ends at all of these sources, is it not a reasonable hypothesis that this matter, if it is as stated, has somehow or other been coordinated with all the interested parties? If this hypothesis is sound CBS is not on the track of some scoop but is running into a matter that seems to have been rather thoroughly coordinated among the properly interested parties.

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4. The second hypothesis is to consider the accusation that this organization has been sponsored by the Americans. If we follow this supposition to its logical conclusion we must realize that on the American side would be involved at the very least the Department of the Army, Department of State and Central Intelligence Agency. If these three departments are involved in any matter over a long period of time it would seem obvious that the coordination between them would entail a frequent review of policy and a corresponding review of budget. Both policy and budget reviews on a long-existing project are common within the American Government structure. If this is granted to be true and Americans are involved but the correspondent believes there is something wild or dangerous about the scheme, then he is leaning to the sensationalist stand that the Americans involved are either knaves who are deliberately squandering Government money or fools who are having the wool pulled over their eyes by the incredibly astute Germans. Is the answer probably not some place in between the Americans are neither knaves nor fools?

5. The third hypothesis dealt with Mr. Hottalet's expressed fear that an independent German intelligence organization might be a power factor that could get out of hand. I suggested that the hypothesis that this organization was to be a CIS did not lend itself to such a conclusion. If it is to be a Central Intelligence service it is obviously coming late on the scene. Asst Blank has already vested interest in the military field and the BfV has vested interest in the field of internal security. This would seem to insure that the necessary checks and balances are already built into the system on the German side. The fear of such a development was always possible but the checks and balances already existing plus the hypothesis that this matter was coordinated made this fear seem somewhat unreasonable.

6. The next hypothesis concerned what comments should be made by Americans in official positions. Suppose, I said, that this organization might be a future German service and suppose it might presently be supported by the Americans. Would it not, therefore, seem highly logical that no American in an official position would make any comment upon something that would one day be an entirely German matter? Any comment given under the present relationships between America and Germany would become a permanent part of the record of such an organization and would in the long run be neither good for the Germans nor the Americans. Mr. Hottalet therefore should expect to receive only one answer; namely, "no comment."

7. The last point discussed was the touchy one of the purpose to be served, if any, by American correspondents pushing this story. I asked Hottalet if he were under pressure by his front office to produce something on this matter and he admitted he had received no such instructions. I asked him if he felt he owed it to his public to produce this story and he conceded that he would feel this necessity only if it served the public interest. From our previous hypotheses I suggested that it might be concluded that the public interest would not be served unless given a complete

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story and that all an incomplete story might do would be to stir up the lunatic fringe of public opinion. Hottelet agreed that on the basis of the various assumptions we had discussed he would think the matter over seriously before broadcasting anything on this matter. He pointed out, however, that the correspondents were in the difficult position of being on the track of what smelled like a good and fascinating story but had no idea how they should handle it. I asked him if he thought a background briefing of reliable correspondents was one way to handle this. He said that it would be valuable for them in order to guide their handling of material on this matter which was almost inevitably coming into their hands. I told him I would investigate the matter of whether such an off-the-record briefing was possible. He in turn, as a good correspondent looking for a scoop, suggested that correspondents not be invited to a briefing but any of them who pursued this subject to HICOO's upper reaches might be given a background briefing. I told him I would inquire into this matter and let him know sometime in the near future whether any such briefing was possible.

8. I mentioned this conversation with Hottelet to Mr. Dowling and he stated that Don Cook of the New York Herald Tribune had brought up the subject with him. Mr. Dowling thought that the process of making no comment but being willing to thrash out various hypotheses and suppositions with certain chosen reporters might be an advisable way to get the leading correspondents on our side in this matter. My only opposition to such discussions or to briefings is that I dislike setting a precedent whereby reporters will beat their way to this office on matters which seem to be in our field. They would take up many hours a week.

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